

Kirsten Baesler
State Superintendent

Robert J. Christman
Deputy Superintendent



600 E Boulevard Ave., Dept. 201
Bismarck, ND 58505-0440
Phone (701) 328-2260
Fax (701) 328-2461
www.nd.gov/dpi

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Contact: Dale Wetzel, Public Information Specialist
Office 701-328-2247
Cell: 701-400-8557
Email: dewetzel@nd.gov

Baesler: North Dakota teacher plan approved

BISMARCK, N.D., Oct. 22, 2015 – State Superintendent Kirsten Baesler announced Thursday that the U.S. Department of Education has approved North Dakota’s state equity plan.

The plan is a blueprint that was drafted by the North Dakota Department of Public Instruction to ensure that all North Dakota students, regardless of where they live or their economic circumstances, are taught by high-quality teachers. The Department of Education required all states to submit a plan.

The Department of Education singled out North Dakota’s plan for praise for offering incentives to attract excellent educators to schools where there is the highest need for them.

“North Dakota’s teachers are provided with easily accessible information about loan forgiveness, and signing bonuses are available for those in hard-to-staff areas,” the department said in a statement Thursday.

Baesler had this reaction to the approval of North Dakota’s equity plan:

“The recruitment and retention of qualified and effective teachers is a priority for me and for the North Dakota Department of Public Instruction. We will use this plan to drive our actions to ensure all students in every part of the state have professional teachers in their classrooms.

“This is not a plan that will be another well-intended set of guidelines that sits upon a shelf. The Department of Public Instruction is committed to implementing the plan. Shortly after the first draft of the plan was submitted in June 2015, I formed a Teacher Recruitment & Retention Task Force to begin the work that needs to be done to make certain our students have the professional teachers they deserve.

“This committee brings together all educational stakeholder groups -- North Dakota United, the North Dakota Council of Educational Leaders, the North Dakota School Boards Association, the Education Standards and Practices Board, and the teacher preparation programs of our private, public and tribal colleges. Together we have already taken steps toward better marketing of the teaching profession. We are also gathering important data to better identify our needs and challenges.

“We will continue to develop ways for more students to take advantage of student loan forgiveness, create more non-traditional pathways to receiving a teaching degree, and making sure that teaching is the highly respected profession it deserves to be.”

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